

Lifetime Mobility in the United States: 2010

Issued November 2011

American Community Survey Briefs

ACSBR/10-07

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. population is characterized by high mobility. Each year many Americans leave their place of birth to reside in a different part of the country.¹ The population mobility has crucial impact on individuals, as well as local demographics and economies. This brief examines lifetime mobility in the United States using place of birth and current residence data from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS). In addition, it examines how such mobility varies by age and geographical area.

Place of birth has long been an important measure of domestic mobility in the U.S. census.² Starting in 1960, the decennial census asked the question on place of birth on the long-form questionnaire. While the census long-form questionnaire was discontinued after 2000, the ACS, the long-form replacement, includes the place of birth question and thus provides data for this report.

This report is one of a series produced to highlight results from the 2010 ACS. The ACS provides detailed estimates of demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics for congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities each year. A description of the ACS is provided in the text box “What Is the American Community Survey?”

¹ Frey, William H. (2009). “The Great American Migration Slowdown: Regional and Metropolitan Dimensions.” *Brookings Policy Brief*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

² Long, Larry E. (1988). *Migration and Residential Mobility in the United States. Population of the United States in the 1980s: Census Monograph Series*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.

Lifetime Mobility: Most people in the United States live in the state in which they were born.

The comparison of data on state of residence in 2010 to data on state and region of birth reflects the cumulative effect of long-term patterns of migration. Fifty-nine percent of people in the United States were born in their state of residence (Table 1). However, there is

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Table 1.

Place of Birth for the United States and Puerto Rico by Region and State: 2010(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

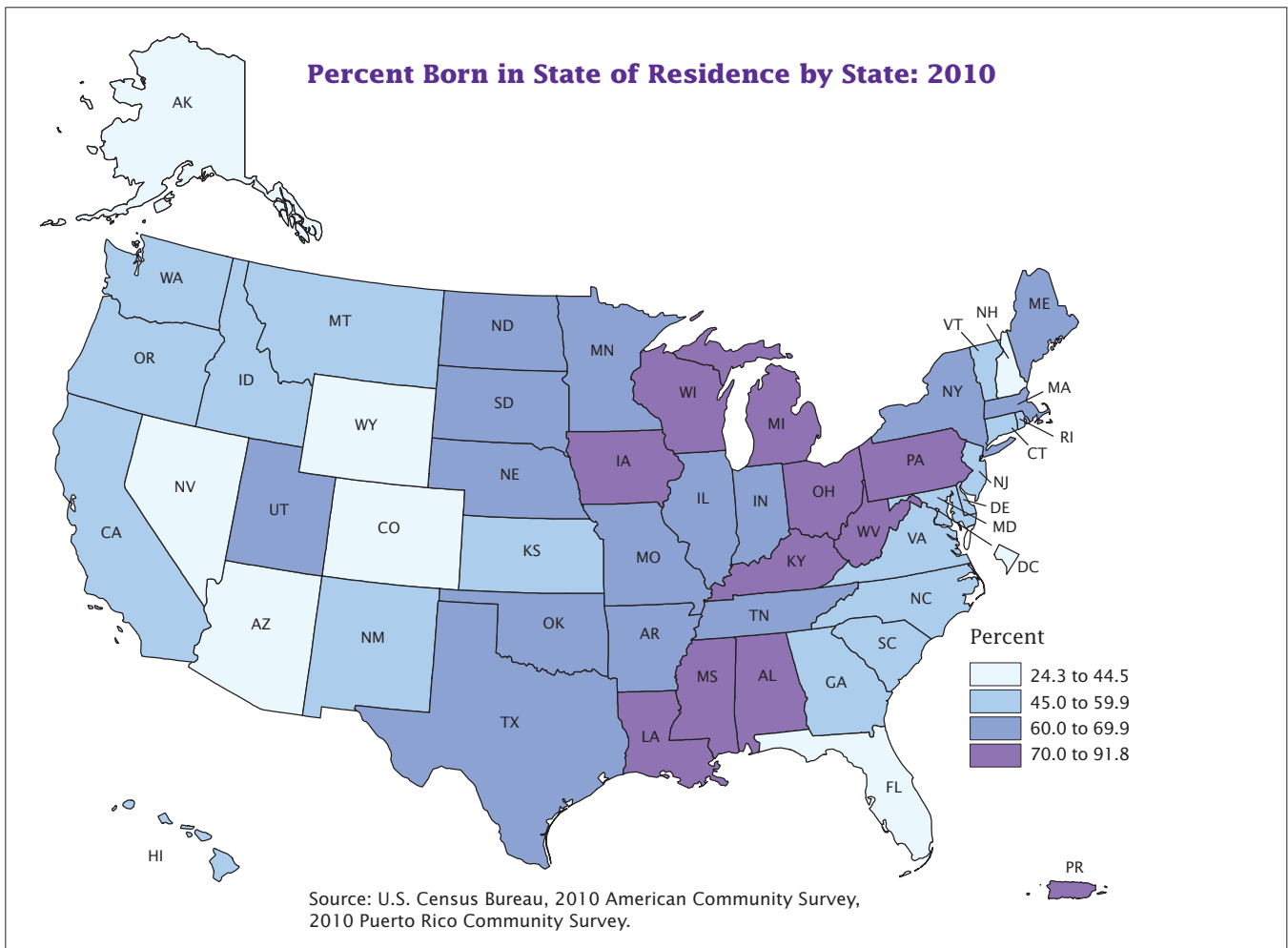
Place of residence in 2010	Total population	Born in United States				Born in Puerto Rico, U.S. Island Areas, or born abroad to U.S. parent(s)		Foreign born	
		Born in state of residence		Born outside state of residence		Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
		Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹				
United States	309,349,689	58.8	0.1	27.0	0.1	1.4	0.1	12.9	0.1
Regions									
Northeast	55,361,036	62.9	0.1	19.3	0.1	2.2	0.1	15.6	0.1
Midwest	66,975,848	70.2	0.1	22.4	0.1	0.7	0.1	6.7	0.1
South	114,865,724	56.0	0.1	31.5	0.1	1.4	0.1	11.1	0.1
West	72,147,081	49.3	0.1	29.9	0.1	1.3	0.1	19.6	0.1
States									
Alabama	4,785,298	70.0	0.4	25.8	0.4	0.7	0.1	3.5	0.1
Alaska	713,985	39.0	0.9	51.9	1.0	2.2	0.3	6.9	0.5
Arizona	6,413,737	37.7	0.4	47.8	0.4	1.2	0.1	13.4	0.3
Arkansas	2,921,606	61.3	0.5	33.5	0.5	0.6	0.1	4.5	0.2
California	37,349,363	53.8	0.2	17.8	0.1	1.2	0.1	27.2	0.2
Colorado	5,049,071	42.5	0.4	46.2	0.4	1.4	0.1	9.8	0.3
Connecticut	3,577,073	55.1	0.5	27.7	0.5	3.6	0.2	13.6	0.4
Delaware	899,769	45.3	1.0	45.2	1.1	1.6	0.3	8.0	0.4
District of Columbia	604,453	37.3	0.9	47.4	1.1	1.8	0.3	13.5	0.7
Florida	18,843,326	35.2	0.2	42.3	0.2	3.1	0.1	19.4	0.2
Georgia	9,712,587	55.2	0.3	33.9	0.3	1.2	0.1	9.7	0.2
Hawaii	1,363,621	55.0	1.0	23.9	0.5	2.9	0.3	18.2	1.0
Idaho	1,571,450	46.9	0.8	46.6	0.7	1.0	0.1	5.5	0.3
Illinois	12,843,166	67.1	0.3	18.2	0.2	1.0	0.1	13.7	0.2
Indiana	6,490,621	68.3	0.4	26.5	0.4	0.6	0.1	4.6	0.1
Iowa	3,049,883	71.7	0.4	23.3	0.4	0.5	0.1	4.6	0.2
Kansas	2,859,169	58.2	0.6	34.4	0.6	0.8	0.1	6.5	0.3
Kentucky	4,346,266	70.3	0.5	25.9	0.4	0.6	0.1	3.2	0.2
Louisiana	4,544,228	78.8	0.4	16.8	0.4	0.6	0.1	3.8	0.1
Maine	1,327,567	64.0	0.7	31.6	0.6	1.0	0.1	3.4	0.2
Maryland	5,785,982	47.6	0.4	37.2	0.4	1.3	0.1	13.9	0.3
Massachusetts	6,557,254	63.1	0.4	19.5	0.3	2.4	0.1	15.0	0.3
Michigan	9,877,574	76.6	0.2	16.9	0.2	0.6	0.1	6.0	0.1
Minnesota	5,310,584	68.8	0.3	23.4	0.3	0.6	0.1	7.1	0.2
Mississippi	2,970,036	71.9	0.5	25.6	0.5	0.4	0.1	2.1	0.2
Missouri	5,996,231	65.9	0.4	29.6	0.4	0.6	0.1	3.9	0.2
Montana	990,898	54.1	0.9	43.2	0.9	0.8	0.1	2.0	0.3
Nebraska	1,830,429	65.6	0.6	27.6	0.6	0.7	0.1	6.1	0.3
Nevada	2,704,642	24.3	0.5	55.2	0.5	1.7	0.2	18.8	0.4
New Hampshire	1,316,759	42.7	0.8	51.0	0.8	1.0	0.2	5.3	0.3
New Jersey	8,801,624	52.4	0.3	24.2	0.2	2.4	0.1	21.0	0.2
New Mexico	2,065,932	51.7	0.7	37.3	0.7	1.1	0.1	9.9	0.5
New York	19,392,283	63.6	0.2	11.8	0.1	2.4	0.1	22.2	0.2
North Carolina	9,561,558	58.5	0.4	33.0	0.4	1.0	0.1	7.5	0.2
North Dakota	674,499	68.6	0.9	28.3	0.9	0.6	0.1	2.5	0.3
Ohio	11,536,182	75.1	0.2	20.1	0.2	0.7	0.1	4.1	0.1
Oklahoma	3,761,702	60.8	0.5	32.8	0.5	0.9	0.1	5.5	0.2
Oregon	3,838,957	45.5	0.4	43.7	0.4	1.0	0.1	9.8	0.3
Pennsylvania	12,709,630	74.0	0.2	18.7	0.2	1.5	0.1	5.8	0.1
Rhode Island	1,052,886	59.3	0.9	25.9	0.9	2.1	0.4	12.8	0.5
South Carolina	4,636,312	58.6	0.4	35.6	0.4	1.1	0.1	4.7	0.2
South Dakota	816,463	65.1	0.8	31.5	0.8	0.7	0.1	2.7	0.3
Tennessee	6,356,897	61.0	0.4	33.6	0.4	0.8	0.1	4.5	0.2
Texas	25,257,114	60.5	0.2	21.9	0.2	1.2	0.1	16.4	0.2
Utah	2,776,469	62.3	0.5	28.6	0.4	1.1	0.1	8.0	0.3
Vermont	625,960	51.1	1.1	43.5	1.1	1.0	0.2	4.4	0.4
Virginia	8,024,617	49.9	0.3	37.1	0.3	1.7	0.1	11.4	0.2
Washington	6,744,496	46.9	0.3	38.3	0.4	1.7	0.1	13.1	0.2
West Virginia	1,853,973	71.1	0.7	27.3	0.6	0.4	0.1	1.2	0.1
Wisconsin	5,691,047	72.1	0.3	22.7	0.3	0.7	0.1	4.5	0.1
Wyoming	564,460	41.5	1.3	54.9	1.2	0.8	0.2	2.8	0.4
Puerto Rico ²	3,722,133	91.8	0.3	5.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	2.8	0.2

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² The first three column headings for the Puerto Rico line differ from the rest of the table. From left to right, the three columns are: born in Puerto Rico, born in the United States, born in U.S. Island areas, or born abroad to U.S. parent(s).

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Puerto Rico Community Survey.

Percent Born in State of Residence by State: 2010



significant geographic variation. At more than 70 percent, the Midwest had the highest percentage of its current population born in their current state, indicating relatively lower lifetime mobility. The West was at the other end of the scale with less than half of its population born in that region. The West led in the proportion of the population that was foreign born, just under 20 percent, followed by the Northeast at 15.6 percent.

The state with the highest percentage of current residents born in-state is Louisiana, with 78.8 percent of current residents born there. It was followed by three states in the great lakes region: Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with 76.6, 75.1, and 74.0 percent of residents born in their

current state, respectively. In four states, Alaska, Arizona, Florida, and Nevada, and in the District of Columbia, less than 40 percent of residents were born in that state or district.³ With less than one quarter of its 2010 population born in that state, Nevada had the lowest percentage in the country. The map that accompanies this report shows the geographic distribution of lifetime mobility in the United States, indicated by the percentage of a state's residents born in that state. Overall, the western region of the country had higher mobility than the eastern portion, although levels in many states on the east coast are also high (Table 1 and map).

³ The percent born in the state of residence for Arizona and District of Columbia are not statistically different from one another.

The propensity to migrate also varied with age. While nearly 90 percent of those under 5 years old were born in their current state of residence, the proportion decreases rapidly as age increases. Slightly more than one half of the population between 25 and 44 were born in their current state of residence. After reaching 64, an age around which many people would retire, the percentage had a brief dip among those who were 65 to 74. It then increased and among those 75 and older, almost 50 percent were currently living in their state of birth. The regional variation is also larger among those who are older. While the percentage of those born in their current state of residence was close to 90 percent in all four regions among those 5 years and

Table 2.

Percent Born in State of Residence by Age and Region: 2010(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Age group	United States		Northeast		Midwest		South		West	
	Born in state of residence		Born in state of residence		Born in state of residence		Born in state of residence		Born in state of residence	
	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
Under 5	89.3	0.1	89.8	0.3	89.9	0.2	88.2	0.2	90.1	0.3
5 to 17 years	78.3	0.1	80.6	0.3	82.2	0.2	75.1	0.2	78.0	0.3
18 to 24 years	63.7	0.2	65.2	0.4	71.1	0.3	60.1	0.3	61.4	0.3
25 to 44 years	50.5	0.1	54.3	0.2	65.0	0.2	47.3	0.2	40.2	0.2
45 to 54 years	50.1	0.1	56.5	0.2	66.2	0.2	46.2	0.2	35.3	0.3
55 to 64 years	49.7	0.1	56.5	0.3	64.9	0.2	47.9	0.2	32.1	0.2
65 to 74 years	47.2	0.1	55.9	0.3	62.6	0.3	46.3	0.2	26.1	0.3
75 years and over	49.4	0.1	60.3	0.3	65.0	0.3	47.4	0.3	25.0	0.3

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

under, by age 75 and over, regional variation became considerably larger. Only one quarter of people 75 and older lived in their state of birth in the West and less than half in the South, compared with 60 percent in the Northeast and 65 percent in the Midwest (Table 2).

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about migration in the United States, go to the U.S. Census Bureau Web site on Migration <www.census.gov/hhes/migration/index.html> or contact the Journey to Work and Migration Statistics Branch of the Census Bureau at 301-763-2454 or e-mail <ping.ren@census.gov>.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on state households selected to participate in the ACS in 2010. The resulting estimates are representative of the entire population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the "2010 ACS Accuracy of the Data" document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf>.